LEMON GROVE CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

Item No. 3
Mtg. Date December 16, 2014
Dept. City Manager's Office

Item Title: **Public Safety Focus Group Report**

Staff Contact: Graham Mitchell, City Manager

Recommendation:

Receive Public Safety Focus Group report and provide direction.

Item Summary:

One of the goals established by the City Council during its 2014 goal setting workshop was to create and receive a report from a Public Safety Focus Group. The City Council established two objectives for the focus group:

1) Provide strategies to address public safety and the perception of safety in the City's commercial corridors, and

2) Provide strategies to address the drain on public resources responding to group homes/sober living facilities.

The purpose of this agenda item is to present the findings developed by the Public Safety Focus Group. The staff report (**Attachment A**) provides background information and presents the findings from the focus group.

Fiscal Impact:

None.

Environmental Review:

☒ Not subject to review
☐ Categorical Exemption, Section

☐ Negative Declaration
☐ Mitigated Negative Declaration

Public Information:

☒ None
☐ Notice published in local newspaper

☐ Newsletter article
☐ Neighborhood meeting

☐ Notice to property owners within 300 ft.

Attachments:

A. Staff Report

**LEMON GROVE CITY COUNCIL
STAFF REPORT**

Item No. ___3___

Mtg. Date ___December 16, 2014___

Item Title: **Public Safety Focus Group Report**

Staff Contact: Graham Mitchell, City Manager

Discussion:

One of the goals established by the City Council during its 2014 goal setting workshop was to create and receive a report from a Public Safety Focus Group. The City Council established two objectives for the focus group (made up of 13 community members):

1) Provide strategies to address public safety and the perception of safety in the City's commercial corridors, and

2) Provide strategies to address the drain on public resources responding to group homes/sober living facilities.

The focus group conducted two meetings. The first meeting focused on the first objective. The focus group, through group discussions, first identified public safety challenges and then solutions to address those specific challenges. During its second meeting, the focus group discussed the drain of public resources resulting from group homes and sober living facilities.

The purpose of this staff report is to provide some of the background data reviewed by the focus group and to present the findings developed from the focus group discussions. For the agenda item presentation, staff will provide an overview of the data included in this report and focus group members will present their findings.

### *Public Safety and the Perception of Safety in Commercial Corridors*

Prior to meeting, staff presented the focus group with a memo that provided data regarding crime in the commercial areas of the City. The report noted that property crime rates are lower than neighboring cities, while violent crime rates area higher. Focus group members were provided two graphs illustrating these data trends.

Annualized Property Crime Index Per 1,000
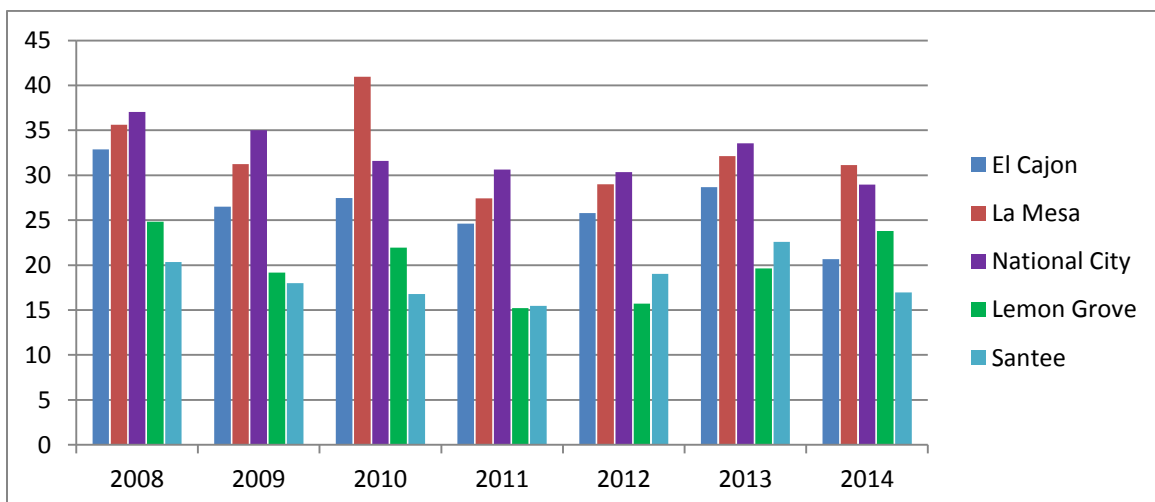
Attachment A

**Annualized Violent Crime Index Per 1,000**
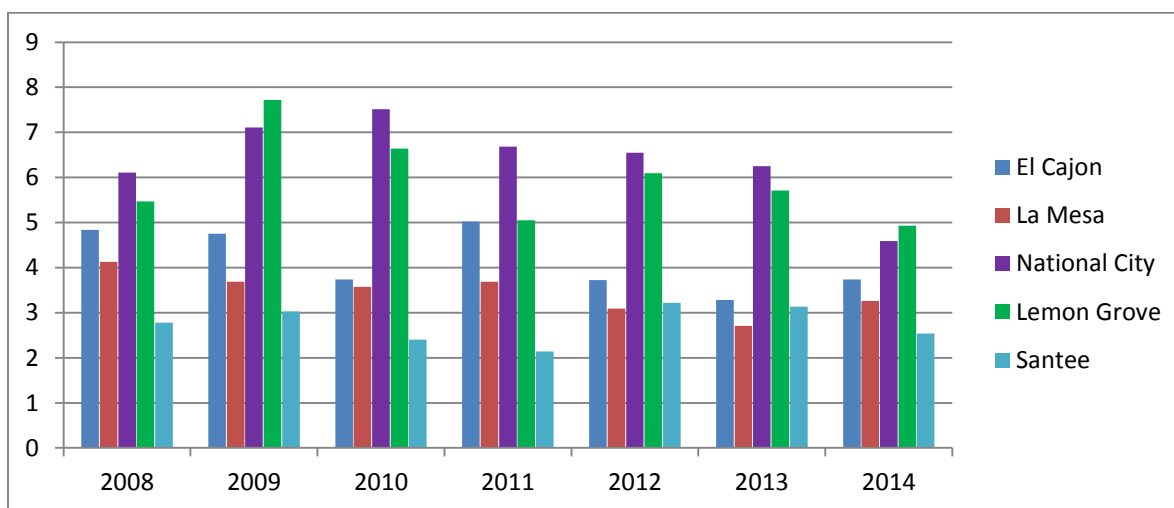
Crime data for the City's commercial corridors for the past year were provided. Between January 1, 2014 and September 30, 2014, there have been 238 crime incidents. The following table shows the crimes committed per quarter.

2014	Crime Incidents
Quarter 1	92
Quarter 2	78
Quarter 3	68
AVERAGE	79.3

Of these 238 incidents, approximately 50 percent were shoplifting incidents. Factoring out the shoplifting crime, there was a monthly average of 13.3 crimes committed in the City's commercial corridor between January 1st and September 30th.

The focus group also was provided data regarding homelessness. Staff provided the group with data from the past five "point in time" survey of homeless population in the City.
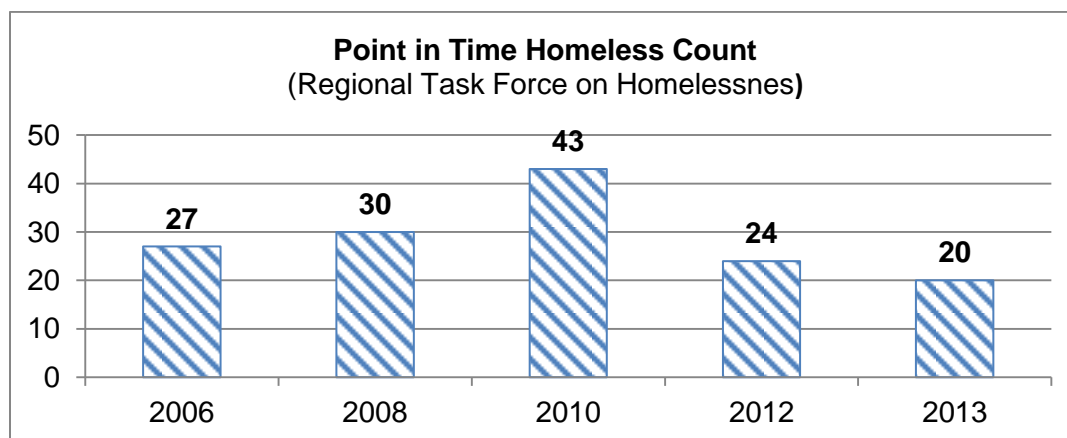
To help understand the impact of homelessness on public safety demands, staff provided data from September 2014 regarding calls for service (not necessarily reportable incidents) that involved the City's homeless population. This activity does not include self-initiated contact or checking for known homeless encampments.

During September, 26 calls for service were made—an average of almost one call per day. Of the 26 calls, six resulted in cases being written by the deputies. Of those 26 calls for service, "trespassing" and "suspicious persons" each made up 30 percent of the calls. The other 40 percent of the calls were related to consuming alcohol in public or intoxication, disturbance, drug related activity, or domestic violence. The majority of the calls for service are concentrated in the area of Broadway/Massachusetts Avenue intersection.

Lastly, staff provided data regarding the number of deputies contracted by the City for the past ten years.

Fiscal Year	Patrol	Traffic	Motor	Total
FY 2005-06	11.68	2.78	1	15.46
FY 2006-07	11.68	2.78	1	15.46
FY 2007-08	12	3	1	16
FY 2008-09	12	3	1	16
FY 2009-10	12	3	1	16
FY 2010-11	12	3	1	16
FY 2011-12	13	3	0	16
FY 2012-13	13	3	0	16
FY 2013-14	13	3	0	16
FY 2014-15	13	3	0	16

Staff informed the focus group that the current annual contact rate for an additional deputy is $194,007.

Most Significant Public Safety Challenges

The focus group, through group discussions, identified the three most significant public safety challenges in the City's commercial corridors. The challenges identified by the focus group included: physical environment, intimidating groups, and lack of community involvement.

Physical Environment

o Some properties and public spaces, because of their design, invite criminal activity or the perception of criminal activity
o Low property and business maintenance standards
o Store layouts and exits attract shoplifting at some businesses

Intimidating Groups

o Congregation of transients and aggressive panhandling creates an unwelcoming atmosphere
o Loitering of gang members or perceived gang members creates a frightening atmosphere for some
o Evidence of substance abuse in public spaces

Lack of Community Involvement

o Residents and visitors do not reporting crime or do not know how to report crime
o Lack of education, training or opportunities for those wishing to bring positive changes to the City's commercial areas

Attachment A

<u>**Solutions**</u>

After identifying the challenges, the focus group members developed solutions to over come the three challenges.

Physical Environment

1) Expand Crime Free Multi-Housing to all apartment complexes in and surrounding commercial zones

2) Create a program similar to Crime Free Multi-Housing for businesses and require them to meet established standards

3) Rely on community volunteers (e.g. students, seniors, others) to provide ongoing clean of the commercial areas

4) Have more visible law enforcement presence/use law enforcement volunteers in commercial areas

5) Proactively use code enforcement to maintain established standards

6) Eliminate design defaults that attract nuisances

7) Establish a visible "resource center" that provides substance abuse counseling, training, mentoring, etc. in the downtown area.

Intimidating Groups

1) Some of the solutions identified for the "Physical Environment" challenge will assist in overcoming this challenge

2) Encourage property owners to enforce "no trespassing" laws

3) Develop an anti-panhandling campaign that encourages residents to donate to local food banks and charitable organizations rather than give money to panhandlers

Lack of Community Involvement

1) Develop a campaign on how to report a crime (marketing materials such as magnets, newsletter information, "see something, say something," etc.)

2) Allow for reporting non-emergency incidents via the City's website

3) Activate neighborhood watch programs in and around the commercial corridors

4) Host a community-wide workshop on how to become more involved in public safety solutions

Group Homes/Sober Living Facilities

To prepare focus group members for the second meeting, staff presented background information and data regarding group homes and sober living facilities. It is important to note that there are many types of facilities and each require different sets of regulations. There are licensed facilities through the State, which include:

- foster family homes,
- group homes that provide 24-hour supervision, care and treatment services,
- adult day programs,
- elderly residential care, and
- drug and alcohol residential treatment facilities.

Sober living or other independent living homes that include six or less beds require no State licensing. Further, local governments are prohibited from regulating these types of facilities through zoning requirements. The challenge with these smaller facilities is that the City does not know how many of these properties actually operate within the City. Using California's state

websites, staff identified the licensed facilities in the City. Relying on its public safety and code enforcement departments, staff also identified the number of "known" sober living/independent living facilities in the City. The table below identifies the number of each of these facilities, along with the known residential capacity for each type (not included in this table are the larger skilled nursing care or senior living complexes). A map that shows the general location of these facilities will be provided.

Type	# of Facilities	Resident Capacity
Certified Drug & Alcohol Residential Treatment	2	140
Licensed Community Care Residential	8	57
KNOWN Sober Living & Other Independent Living	17	unknown

Staff calculated the number of calls for service between July 1, 2013 and June 30, 2014 from both the Fire Department and the Sheriff's Department.

Facility Category	Fire Calls for Service	Sheriff Calls for Service	Total Calls for Service
Certified Drug & Alcohol Residential Treatment (2)	49	73	122
Licensed Community Care Residential (8)	19	82	101
[KNOWN] Sober Living & Other Independent Living (15)	85	134	219
TOTAL	**153**	**289**	**442**

During this one-year period, a total of 442 calls were responded to by public safety staff. The Certified Drug & Alcohol Residential Treatment facilities (both operated by the McAlister Institute) average 61 calls per year, each Licensed Community Care Residential facility averages 12.6 calls per year, and each known Sober Living & Other Independent Living home averages 14.6 calls per year.

The average number of calls per facility is skewed by several properties that demand greater service than others. For example, two of the Licensed Community Care facilities required 77 calls combined—leaving the other six facilities an average of only four calls last year. Of the Sober Living & Other Independent Living homes, one property had as many as 64 calls in the one-year period while four properties had two or less calls for service.

Fire Department calls for service range from reaction to medication to difficulty breathing, seizures, vomiting, drug overdose, etc. Sheriff's Department calls for service range from mental health evaluation to drug/alcohol violation, assault, domestic disturbance, etc.

There is a cost associated with responding to a call for service. An average Fire Department call for service of 23 minutes equates to a cost of approximately $60 for an engine company to respond. An average Sheriff's Department call for service of 90 minutes equates to a cost of $225. Assuming the calls for service to these facilities last year were average calls, the City spent approximately $74,000 providing services to these known 25 facilities.

Solutions

The focus group discussed possible solutions that are within the scope of State law. The focus group recognized that the City cannot regulate State-licensed facilities or small group homes through zoning. The focus group also recognized that well-run facilities do not generate

Attachment A

abnormally high volumes of calls. Some of the solutions developed were general and comprehensive, while other solutions were more targeted to those that are deemed to have excessive calls.

Targeted Solutions – the focus group identified several targeted solutions. It was thought that perhaps some owners that lease their residential properties to those that operate group homes may not know the challenges the City faces relative to their property. Given this possibility, the focus group suggested that the City reach out to owners with high public safety call volumes. The City could offer to meet with interested owners and inform them of the problems at the property and offer resources to assist them (i.e. lease agreements and industry standard rules and regulations).

In the event property owners are not willing to assist in lowering call volumes, the focus group discussed the possibility of the City establishing penalties for any property requiring higher than average levels of public safety services—similar to false alarm penalty fees. This would be enforced on any property exceeded a determined number of calls in a given period of time.

Lastly, the focus group discussed relying on code enforcement tools. It was assumed that properties that require many calls for service may also have code enforcement violations. Staff inspected, from the pubic right-of-way, each of the properties with 10 or more calls last year and found no code violations. Staff also reviewed the files and found no complaints about the high volume call properties. As such, this strategy may not be effective.

General/Comprehensive Solutions – the focus group identified a general or comprehensive solution. Because the City cannot regulate group homes, the focus group discussed the idea of requiring a business license for rental units in the City. This concept would allow for certain regulations through the business licensing process, such as required participation in crime-free housing programs and establishment of business standards (including lease agreements) with penalties for non-compliance. This strategy would require a municipal code change through a vote of the electorate and would be a costly program to administer. Other legal ramifications would need to be evaluated.

Conclusion:

During its goal workshop discussions, the City Council discussed evaluating solutions identified by the Public Safety Focus Group and considering them for implementation. Some of the ideas generated by the focus group are relatively easy to implement (i.e. proactively using code enforcement tools, encourage owners to enforce "no trespassing" laws, or market ways to report crimes). Other focus group suggestions are much more complex to evaluate and implement (i.e. create and manage a downtown cleanup volunteer crew, identify and eliminate design features that attract nuisances, or initiate a ballot measure to change the business licenses ordinance). Staff suggests that these more complex solutions be addressed during the upcoming City Council goal setting workshop in January/February 2015.